361 tornadoes in the rainy season, is another ecological consideration.

591 [621] The hamlet is always a kinship unit, usually patrilocal and patrilineal. When a young man marries, his father will give him a cow or two, as he will to his daughter. But only the son will receive the use of part of his father's rented (or owned) fields to support his new family. Thus he will usually build his hut near his father's, father's brother's, and paternal grandfather's. In exceptional cases, when no land is available at his father's, the bridegroom may agree to establish himself at his wife's hamlet, but this is rare since the feeling is that he will always remain a subjugated, barely tolerated, henpecked and ill-treated figure. A proud Amhara male, even a "gabbar" (peasant ex-serf), would not agree to such a condition and insists on patriarchal status at least within his own biological family of creation. He would much rather continue [606] to obey his father than his new father-in-law. Consanguinal kinship feelings are so strong that it is a common assumption that no in-law could really mean well and be unselfishly well-disposed to the newcomer. Only when warfare has killed off the adult males in a hamlet, male inlaws move in.

● 592 Each hut is inhabited by a biological family, usually father and mother, about three children who have survived infant mortality, and perhaps an aged parent or old, widowed kinswoman of the husband's.

602 Patrilineal kinship relations are often related also to administrative considerations. On church-owned land, the peasants who live on the hillside below the church, who

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

other hand, has hitherto been impeded by two characteristics of humanistic and social studies. The historian's view has been limited by his reliance on written records that deal chiefly with the activities of men of power and the conceptions of literati. The ethnographer or traveler who tries to give the peasantry its due has usually concentrated on the more evident and accessible facts of custom—activities related to work, play, kinship, and ritual. The peasant's inner feelings and notions have perforce been neglected.[3]

In default of a widely disseminated sensibility to peasant realities, modernizing Ethiopians have thus come to view the peasantry in terms of misleading stereotypes: either romantically, as an embodiment of virtue, awaiting only proper leadership to realize their suppressed aspirations for freedom, justice, and progress; or else as inhabitants of a dark hinterland, barbarous in custom and blind with superstition. In this chapter we shall attempt a more empirical account of one part of the Ethiopian peasant's world—that of the Amhara—with particular emphasis on the beliefs and values of the peasant himself. Our account is based on seven months of residence among the Amhara peasantry, using the observational techniques of participant observation, discreet questioning, analysis of folk expressions, and Thematic Apperception Tests (TAT).[4]

THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING OF PEASANT LIFE

The homestead is the basic ecological and social unit of the Amhara peasantry. The average homestead consists of from one to six small round structures, built of wattle (or stone, as in Manz) and capped with conical thatched roofs. A well-equipped homestead will have one building for eating and sleeping, one for animals, one for grain storage, one as a kitchen, and one for entertaining guests; though for many peasants all these functions are served by a single large building. The homestead is normally located on land worked by the peasant. While most peasants plow land whose use is theirs by hereditary right (*rïst*), some are tenants on estates owned by the king, lords, monasteries, or older relatives.

The smallest homesteads consist simply of husband, wife, and unmarried children. Sometimes a young married son will remain within the family home and, much less frequently, a young married daughter. Occasionally an older relative will be sustained there, or a younger relative will be brought up there. One or more servants—slaves, until a generation ago—complete the household. The wealthier the peasant, the more relatives and servants will be found in the homestead.

At times hamlets will be formed by the clustering of households of a number of married brothers or other kin. These tend to have a patriarchal cast; if the father is no longer living, the oldest male relative usually assumes jurisdiction for the affairs of the hamlet. But the nucleated village, contrary to erroneous

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

impressions conveyed by much of the literature on Ethiopia, is not a normal ecological unit in Amhara society.

Each homestead gives the appearance of self-sufficiency and autonomy, but it is bound to a wider social context in a number of ways. While satisfying most of its consumption needs by its own efforts, every household depends on the market for certain items. The highland peasants must go to market for their chili, onions, peppers, hops, and cotton; while lowland peasants must barter for barley and sheep there. Salt and foreign fabrics must be imported from afar, and iron and clay products must be bought from specialists who bring their wares. Limited needs for currency—chiefly for rifles and, since 1942, taxes—are also met at the market.

The markets normally are held once a week. Every homestead is within walking distance of at least one market; though often the trip may take several hours, at times the greater part of a day. Markets in the same region are often scheduled on different days, so that, for example, the family which misses the one five hours to the north on Saturday can catch another four hours to the south on Tuesday. The virtual absence of roads throughout the countryside makes travel to market slow and tedious, but wealthier peasants nonetheless manage to transport quantities of grain and livestock to the provincial capitals for better prices and a wider selection of consumers' goods.

The household is linked to a wider world politically as well as economically. By providing tithes, revenues, military service, and corvée labor, the peasant has traditionally been obliged to support an extensive political hierarchy. In return for this he has received an organization for defending the country against enemies, and a structure of legitimate authority sufficient to maintain order and settle disputes.

The peasant's relations with this political hierarchy have been mediated by the office of *chīqā shum*, a district headman. This office is circulated, usually annually, among a small number of men whose eligibility is based on their ownership of certain pieces of land. As the land passes from father to son, so does the eligibility for being *chīqā shum*.

Traditionally the *chīqā shum* was a role of considerable importance. It carried the duties of tax collection, adjudication, promulgation of official decrees, supervision of occasional work projects, levying of men for military service, and officiating at civil marriages and divorces. Through his work the *chīqā shum* received a variety of fees and bribes. In cases of flagrant misbehavior the local people were able to dismiss him from office. The reorganization of provincial administration since 1942 has deprived the *chīqā shum* of many of his former powers, but the office still exists and plays a modest role in peasant life.

The district over which a *chīqā shum* has authority is the closest thing to a village unit among the Amhara. It is usually coterminous with the area sur-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

The instruction of girls in noble families was not so different from that of peasant girls, though they were spared some of the menial drudgery. The *ch'awā* girl would be taught all the household arts, but it was understood that she would be provided with numerous slaves to do the work after marriage. Her own adult chores would be limited to the preparation of *tajj*, the beverage of the nobility, and special dishes for her husband; while the preparation of *tallā* and food for guests would be the work of domestics.

The style of life of the nobility is colored above all by a seemingly unlimited command of deference. They are addressed as "my lord" by all comers, and waited on in a hundred ways wherever they go. Every "big man" is attended by a flock of servants and retainers, who accompany him on trips and spare him the slightest exertion. This is so elemental a feature of Amhara culture that big men are commonly referred to with the associative prefix *enna-*; for example, *enna-Dajāzmāch Hailu*, meaning "Dajāzmāch Hailu and his men."

The social space of a nobleman is crowded with the issuing of commands. When he visits the home of another, he orders the servants and young people there just as imperiously as if he were in his own home. The wives of the nobility develop much the same manner, though from a more passive position. They spend a good deal of their time sitting on their beds and issuing orders. This sort of indolent, vegetative existence has produced the obese figure and morose countenance for which some Abyssinian ladies have been noted. On the other hand, from her particular vantage point the noble lady has often played an influential and enlightened part in court and regional politics.

Conspicuous consumption among the *makuānnent* thus takes the form of a surfeit of servants. The household of a nobleman of modest rank might boast, in addition to numerous maidservants who procure and prepare food and drink for the establishment, as many as ten to fifteen male servants. Plowden has left us a description of some of their functions:

> One carries your shield, and whenever you go out he saddles your mule and accompanies you, and in the house he makes himself generally useful about your person; another makes your mead, arranges it, and is also perhaps a gunner, and supplies you with game; another is doorkeeper and order-keeper generally. One or two, older and wiser, are counsellors, and their knowledge of the country, and of customs and tricks, is of the greatest service; another has charge of the corn, watching that the maidservants do not steal, and arranging the allowance of all the rest; others are grass-cutters only, according to the number of your beasts; another is a wood-cutter for firewood, very necessary in a country where they have no coal, and the wilderness is free to all.[21]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Synchronization and Privacy

*121 181 571 The degree of independence that exists in Amhara society may be further assessed by focusing on certain abstract properties of its organization as well as on the concrete institutions just discussed. In this context two variables are particularly relevant. One, degree of synchronization, concerns the extent to which the behavior of the individuals in group activities is strictly controlled and co-ordinated. The other concerns the extent to which the individual may be free from the intrusion of others when he desires privacy.

Except in the area of protocol and etiquette at the royal court, synchronization is conspicuously lax among the Amhara. Ample scope is left for individual whim and impulse in nearly every area of concerted activity. Groups of people going on a trip, for example, make little attempt to start at the same [476] time or to keep abreast of each other. Carefully co-ordinated teamwork is scarcely known in manual labor. Military units proceed, not in squads and [504] platoons, but as masses of individuals.

*121 181 571 533 535 The lack of synchronization in singing and dancing is perhaps the most striking case of all, for in these activities the participating individuals are supposed to be performing in unison. Yet the choirs of *dabtarā* sing with little regard for the standard line; each chorister sings as the spirit moves him, and the resulting cacophony is punctuated from time to time as some voice stands out by intoning a phrase with new energy a few beats before or after the majority of his fellows. A similar phenomenon occurs in dance, where what apparently is intended to be a symmetry of motion appears rather as a cohort of individual movements.* The impression left by such performances is that the Amhara accord a high degree of independence to the individual whenever he does take part in collective enterprises.

*121 181 571 [591] [576] The Amhara likewise maintain a high degree of respect for individual privacy, despite the hierarchical character of their society. This is shown, first, in the expectation that each nuclear family should inhabit its separate dwelling. The individual home is regarded with great respect; no one, not even a relative, presumes to enter another's home without being properly acknowledged and escorted inside. When possible, private quarters are isolated from those where guests are entertained. The ideal Amhara household, [592] found among the well-to-do, contains separate buildings for private quarters [342] (*ʾilfiñ*) and for the hall where company is received and entertained (*addārāsh*).

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* At times, it may be noted, when more complex ceremonies permit a plurality of musical and choreographic themes to be going on simultaneously, despite the lack of synchronization the over-all aesthetic effect is often quite impressive. Such is the case, for example, in the ceremonial procession on Tiṃqat day described in chap. iii.

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635 Parish and Hamlet. The highland zones can be di-
vided along three complementary social dimensions---po-
*[192] litical, ecclesiastical, and economic. Politically, the
province is divided into awraja (sub-province), warada
(district of a sub-province), and meketel warada (sub-
632 district). The meketel warada consists of fifteen to
361 thirty parishes (deber). The parish, in turn, is com-
*[192] posed of three to ten hamlets (gender), each consisting
• 592 of ten to fifty households (bet). Most households con-
sist of husband, wife, unmarried sons, and pre-pubscent
daughters[11]; a minority of households consist of aged
spouses only, or of widowed individuals living by them-
592 selves. Characteristically, the households of a hamlet
361 are dispersed, so that any one is perhaps 100 to 300
meters from its closest neighbors.

617 While officials of the provincial and sub-provin-
cial governments are generally out-landers appointed by
the central government, administrators of the warada
and meketel warada are usually members of the local gen-
*[192] try. Within the parish, civil administration is in the
hands of the ceka Sum, a petty administrator who imple-

[582] [11] Since it is common for a girl to marry at 11 or
[591] 12, but to delay the virilocal move until age 15 or 16,
the natal household may include a married daughter.

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

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motives of piety and supplication, to the saints' eponymic churches. Within the environs of Gondar, for example, there are forty-two churches, and perhaps half are of sufficient antiquity and fame to mark them for special visits on the saints' days. Each of the market towns contains at least one famous church. The larger towns are, moreover, the seats of their sub-provinces, and are the objects of visits by peasants on "government" (mongist) business. Most frequently, this means
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litigation involving the disposition of land rights.

361 Two Rural Hamlets. Tikurmidir and Lemmariet are neighboring hamlets, situated on fertile dega lands. Together they occupy the southwest quadrant of Kidus Yowhannis parish (hamlet and parish names are pseudonyms), a three hour walk from the awraja seat, Dabat town, in the Woggera region. Of the two, Tikurmidir is larger:

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	Tikurmidir	Lemmariet
Total population	151	95
Total households	36	24

In both hamlets, a majority of households are headed by
[613]
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ristoña. These households are distributed among the hamlets' ambilineages as follows:

	Tikurmidir	Lemmariet
Ambilineage I	18	10
Ambilineage II	6	1

	Tikurmidir	Lemmariet
Ambilineage III	4	
Ambilineage IV	3	
Ambilineage V		5
Ambilineage VI		3
Ambilineage VII		2
Total risteñas households	31	21

In each of the hamlets, there are two households belonging to Amhara tenant farmers (timeneña), individuals unable to claim membership in any local ambilineage. These tenants, who provide their own seed and draught animals, return a quarter of their crops to the risteñas whose fields they use. There in Tikurmidir two additional timeneña households, whose members are Muslims. These households are headed by brothers who supplement their agricultural activities by weaving the Yama (toga) for local Christians.

Primary rights to a third of a parish's fields are believed to reside with the parish church. Ideally, the use of such fields, known as yikeys mariet ("priest's land"), is given to local priests in return for participating in the Masses of the parish church. In practice, rist-holding ambilineages become associated with specific tracts of yikeys mariet by providing such priests over generations. Occasionally, ambilineage

members are unable to retain their claims to these church lands (which are intimately linked to the acquisition of leadership positions and prestige within the parish) by providing priests from their own ranks. Consequently, substitutes from outside the parish must be obtained. Such is the case with ambilineage I today. According to current allocation of yikeya mariet in Tikurmidir and Lemmariet, ambilineages I and V are each expected to provide three priests for the Mass. Ambilineage V currently provides its three from three ambilineage households of Lemmariet. Ambilineage I, however, currently provides only one risteña priest (a resident of Tikurmidir). Thus, members of ambilineage I using these fields have been obliged to invite two non-risteña priests to take up residence on a portion of these lands, in return for participation in the Mass.

Finally, these hamlets contain three female servants, unrelated to other residents of the parish. In Tikurmidir, there is a single Amhara attached to a household of ambilineage I; in Lemmariet there is a "bariya" in a household of ambilineage I, and another in a household of ambilineage V.

Herbalist Medicine in Tikurmidir and Lemmariet. The herbalist therapies of these two hamlets are described in Table 7. With the use of this information, the following paragraphs will indicate that the professional

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

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*759 (Kusil:Kabiy:k°:I+) and (Yilfiyn Basiyta:Kabiy:k°:I)
(Wosfat:Ateci:k°:I) and (Kowsow:Ateci:k°:I)
(Yisaal Basiyta:Ateci:k°:II+) and (Kurtimat:Kabiy:k°:II)
In Lemmariet:
(Koruba:Seci:i:I+) and (Mic:Seci:i:I)
(Koruba:Seci:i:I) and (Mic:Seci:i:I)
(Aynitila:Ateci:k°:II) and (Yisaal Basiyta:Ateci:k°:II)
(Wosfat:Ateci:k°:III) and (Yisaal Basiyta:Ateci:k°:III)
The combination of therapies owned by any one herbalist is recognized by Amhara as being entirely adventitious, although no secular herbalist is considered likely to own multiple therapies for a single disease-name specialty.

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*759 Since three of Tikurmidir's herbalists are women, and two of them reside with herbalist spouses, the dis-
[562] [592] tribution of herbalists among households is as follows:

	Tikurmidir	Lemmariet
[162] Household with one or more herbalists:	19	16
%of Amhara households with one or more herbalists:	56%	67%

The distribution of herbalist therapies in these hamlets is further characterized by a high degree of "redundancy", that is to say, the presence of two or more therapies directed against the same named ailment, but practiced by different herbalists:

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621 A Gondar Ward. Gabrael sebeka lies on Gondar's eastern flank, and is typical of those wards which are not given over entirely to talla sellers or tradesmen. [241] Until liberation, it was occupied by risteñas and cul- [423] tivaters of timene and church lands (riym). During the [198] last three decades, the ward's character changed greatly, [795] as domiciles for out-landers were built on its fields, [342] and many of its erstwhile peasants took up employment in [463] the town. Today, the ward contains 198 residents. Ten [161] of its forty-four households are headed by Gondar-born 632 people; of these, five were born in Gabrael sebeka it- 621 self. The remaining household heads are a) Amhara from 592 other parts of Begemder (sixteen households), from Gojam (five households), and from Wollo (five households); b) Tigreans (three households); c) local Agaw (two households); d) Shoans (four households); and e) Sankella (one household). On the average, the ward's adult residents who were not born in Gondar have lived fifteen [240] years in this sebeka. With the exception of three house- [793] holds which still depend exclusively on farming, and [463] two local priests (sharing the Mass with priests residing in an adjacent ward), the ward's residents are supported by occupations which depend upon daily contact with [463] people of many other sebekas. In brief, seven household heads are policemen, thirteen hold other government employment, five work as zibañas, eight as wood cutters,

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two as talla sellers, and one each as mat seller, carpenter, day laborer, and pensioner.

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The practice of herbalist therapies in ward and town contrasts significantly with the situation in rural hamlet and parish. The relatively dense population of the town has important consequences. In the countryside, the closest herbalist needed for a specific episode may be a day's walk from the client's home; in the town several may be found within an hour's walk. The increase in herbalist therapies is not directly proportional to the increased population of town over countryside, however.

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In Gabrael sebeka, for example, only eighteen households (41% of the total) contain one or more herbalists. Many townfolk are forced to abstain from practicing herbalist therapies, because, as out-landers, they are unable or disinclined to locate needed botanicals. Also, significant numbers of townsfolk practice non-secular therapies, particularly as balazars.

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Further, although there are more redundant herbalist therapies potentially available to the townsman, he remains ignorant of many of them. The peasant locates himself within a network of several core kinsmen and neighbors upon whom he depends for information regarding herbalist chains. The townsman finds his place in a social matrix in which kinship ties are greatly diluted by distance.

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In Gabrael sebeka, for example, thirty-two house-

holds (73% of the total) are without kinship ties to any other of the ward's households. Although many of these residents have kinsmen in other parts of Gondar, few have more than one or two relatives in the town. In addition, because most townfolk rely upon non-agricultural employment for their subsistence needs, there is a concomitant disinterest in ambilineage fields. A consequence is a weakening of the important economic bonds which otherwise link kinsmen to one another.

Kinship ties are an important means by which the peasant acquires and communicates information necessary for constructing herbalist chains. Since almost every herbalist therapy of the rural parish enjoys its own "pedigree", or trans-generational reputation, the peasant herbalist is provided with means for 1) publicly validating his therapeutic claims, and 2) communicating the existence of the therapy to his potential clients. Potential clients frequently associate the ownership of a famous herbalist therapy with the members of a specific ambilineage, often identifiable by name. Both the ambilineage (whose identity is linked to its fields) and its medical reputation (which is tied to the ambilineage) are attached to a particular location. Since residence is most often viripatrilocal, the transmission of such therapeutic reputations is characterized by an agnatic bias. The male therapist moving to town, like